

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a construction site. It shows a dense network of blue metal scaffolding against a clear blue sky. Several construction workers are visible, wearing orange safety gear and hard hats, working on different levels of the scaffolding. The title text is overlaid on the top half of this image.

Scaffolding Human-centred Innovation through Design Artefacts

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Masters in Design (Research)

Certificate of original authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me.

Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of student:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wehrle', written in a cursive style.

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Table of contents

| | |
|---|------|
| Scaffolding Human-centred Innovation through Design Artefacts | i |
| Certificate of original authorship | ii |
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| Table of contents | iii |
| List of Figures | vii |
| List of Tables | viii |
| Abstract | ix |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Research motivation | 1 |
| 1.2 Research aim and significance | 4 |
| 1.3 Overview of the thesis | 4 |
| Chapter 2: Literature review | 6 |
| 2.1 Human-centred innovation, customer-centricity and design | 6 |
| 2.1.1 Customer-centricity | 6 |
| 2.1.2 Design | 7 |
| 2.2 Design artefacts | 10 |
| 2.2.1 Artefacts within design practice | 10 |
| 2.2.2 Artefacts within the organisation | 11 |
| 2.2.4 Human-centred research | 12 |
| 2.2.3 Artefact formats | 14 |
| 2.3 Organisational contexts & Activity Theory | 15 |
| 2.3.1 Organisational contexts | 15 |
| 2.3.2 Activity Theory | 16 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Chapter 3: The case | 20 |
| 3.1 Project context | 20 |
| 3.2 Influential contextual factors | 21 |
| 3.3 The project activities | 22 |
| 3.3.1 Listen: Design research phase | 23 |
| 3.3.2 Define: Design synthesis phase | 25 |
| 3.3.3 Design phase | 28 |
| 3.3.4 Delivering the artefacts | 30 |
| 3.3.5 Additional artefacts | 31 |
| Chapter 4: The research process | 35 |
| 4.1 Epistemic and theoretical considerations | 35 |
| 4.2 Researching professional practice | 37 |
| 4.3 Research strategy | 38 |
| 4.4 Research design | 39 |
| 4.4 Research instruments and data collection | 41 |
| 4.5 Data analysis | 47 |
| 4.6 Validity | 49 |
| 4.7 Ethical considerations | 51 |
| 4.8 Risks | 51 |
| Chapter 5 Analysis and insights | 53 |
| 5.1 Human-centred design practice is intimately linked to its social context | 53 |
| 5.2 Collaboration is essential to work practice and challenging to enable | 54 |
| 5.3 A strong personal internal network is important for getting things done | 55 |
| 5.4 Gaining internal support is critical for project continuation | 56 |
| 5.5 Operationalising customer-centricity is challenging | 57 |
| 5.6 Design artefacts function as social mediators | 59 |
| 5.6.1 Strategic vs. tactical roles | 60 |
| 5.6.2 Persuasive tools | 60 |

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|----|
| 5.6.3 | Codifying and communicating human-centred design knowledge | 61 |
| 5.6.4 | The need to facilitate a customer-centric perspective for staff | 62 |
| 5.6.5 | Compelling, memorable and sharable objects | 63 |
| 5.7 | Design artefacts support human-centred innovation design and its associated processes..... | 64 |
| 5.8 | Design artefacts support customer-centric organisational change..... | 65 |
| Chapter 6 Discussion | | 67 |
| 6.1. | The relationship between design artefacts and their practice contexts is dialogic..... | 67 |
| 6.1.1 | Design artefacts are designed in response to their practice contexts and also function to influence their practice contexts..... | 67 |
| 6.1.2 | Design artefacts play dynamic and flexible roles for diverse staff | 69 |
| 6.1.3 | How staff think about design practices and its applicability for problem solving, affects design practice and design artefacts' roles..... | 70 |
| 6.2 | Design artefacts play enabling and mediatory roles | 72 |
| 6.2.1 | Design artefacts play persuasive and political roles..... | 73 |
| 6.2.2 | Design artefacts function as customer empathy enablers | 74 |
| 6.2.3 | Design artefacts facilitate collaboration and conversation..... | 75 |
| 6.2.4 | Design artefacts activate collaboration and participation | 76 |
| 6.2.5 | Design artefacts effectively communicate customer-centric knowledge and support organisational learning..... | 77 |
| 6.2.6 | Design artefacts provide reflective sense-making tools..... | 78 |
| 6.2.7 | Design artefacts communicate design knowledge and shared visions for the future..... | 79 |
| 6.3 | Scaffolding innovation | 81 |
| 6.3.1 | Scaffolding human-centred innovation initiatives with design artefacts | 82 |
| 6.3.2 | Scaffolding customer-centric organisational transformation with design artefacts | 83 |
| 6.3.3 | Factors affecting design artefacts' capacity to scaffold human-centred innovation and organisational transformation | 84 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Chapter 7: Conclusion | 87 |
| 7.1 Insights and statement of claim..... | 87 |
| 7.2 Contributions to the field of design | 87 |
| 7.3 Research limitations | 88 |
| 7.4 Opportunities for future research | 90 |
| 7.5 In closing | 93 |
| Appendix | 95 |
| Appendix 1: Additional schematics from the case project | 95 |
| Appendix 2: Schematics used in data analysis..... | 96 |
| Appendix 3: Abridged CV of lead designer/primary researcher | 98 |
| Bibliography | 99 |

List of Figures

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----|
| Figure 1 | The third generation of Activity Theory (Engeström 1999) | 17 |
| Figure 2 | Design and research activities conducted within a three-phase design process (i.e. listen, define and design) | 22 |
| Figure 3 | Visiting a CompanyX call-centre | 23 |
| Figure 4 | Exploring experiential requirements using photography flash cards | 23 |
| Figure 5 | An affinity mapping board showing grouped verbatim quotes and summary statements | 24 |
| Figure 6 | Identification of high-level customer work activities | 25 |
| Figure 7 | Opportunity map identifying where CompanyX can deliver improved services to support identified activities | 26 |
| Figure 8 | A customer journey map artefact with annotations showing content | 26 |
| Figure 9 | Persona from the case (content is covered to protect intellectual property) | 28 |
| Figure 10 | Speedboat activity posters with Post-It notes | 29 |
| Figure 11 | Example element from the info-graphic artefact | 31 |
| Figure 12 | Representative still from the research video where customer challenges were presented through verbatim quotes | 31 |
| Figure 13 | Example page from the wire-frame artefact | 32 |
| Figure 14 | Example future-story storyboard from the case | 33 |
| Figure 15 | The conceptual model for considering the case artefacts as objects of design activities | 40 |
| Figure 16 | The conceptual model for considering the project artefacts as mediating artefacts for organisational members' activities | 41 |
| Figure 17 | The three research perspectives considered in this study | 42 |
| Figure 18 | Example of artefacts used to map contradictions on the case's activity systems during data analysis | 49 |
| Figure 19 | A day in the life activity from the customer co-design workshop | 95 |
| Figure 20 | The interlinked activity systems considered in the case | 98 |
| Figure 21 | Additional maps used within data analysis representing activity system 1 | 98 |
| Figure 22 | Additional maps used within data analysis representing activity system 2 | 99 |
| Figure 23 | Additional maps used within data analysis representing activity system 3 | 99 |
| Figure 24 | Additional maps used within data analysis representing activity system 4 | 99 |
| Figure 25 | Enlarged section of the journey map shown on p. 26 (Fig.8) | 101 |

List of Tables

| | | |
|---------|---|----|
| Table 1 | The content of the customer journey map artefacts | 27 |
| Table 2 | The research protocol used within the study (Yin 2003) | 42 |
| Table 3 | The different sources of data used within the research..... | 44 |
| Table 4 | The interview informants, their background, duration of employment and informant type..... | 45 |
| Table 5 | Data criteris used within the spreadsheet for data analysis during phase 1 of analysis | 48 |

Abstract

Human-centred innovation refers to innovation that is informed by customer insight. Contemporary organisations are increasingly turning to human-centred design approaches to inform both their human-centred innovation efforts and the associated shift to customer-centricity. Unlike invention and design, innovation requires implementation. It rests upon collective outcomes, generated from the combined activities of many stakeholders. Design artefacts have always been at the core of design practice, comprising both *outcomes of* as well as *inputs into* design processes. Within human-centred innovation contexts, design practice and the roles of design artefacts have distinct qualities. Design artefacts such as personas, prototypes, customer journey maps and videos communicating customer research provide designers and other staff with valuable mediatory and enabling tools within human-centred innovation processes.

Organisational studies literature points to the valuable role artefacts play in communication, collaboration, social mediation, knowledge sharing and transformation; however there is a gap in the literature about the roles design artefacts play as inputs into the innovation process and as instruments to support innovation within organisations. Investigation into how design artefacts function to facilitate and motivate collective action, enable communication and support organisational transformation is the central motivation of this research. The research aims to examine the role of design artefacts as flexible tools that mediate the social, interlinked demands of human-centred innovation initiatives within organisations.

Through a practice-led case study, using the conceptual framework of Activity Theory, we examine how some specific design artefacts supported an organisation in designing and delivering a specific human-centred innovation initiative. Data from participant observation and qualitative interviews, conducted with a sample of artefact recipients and design practitioners, informs examination of the various roles the case artefacts played within organisational activities. The study draws attention to the persuasive character of design artefacts, their role as social mediators, their ability to facilitate a customer-centric perspective for diverse organisational members and their potential to affect organisational change. The term 'scaffold' in the thesis title signifies structures that enable and support the work of others. The research illustrates how design artefacts can function to scaffold human-centred innovation within the organisation. It contributes to knowledge about human-centred innovation processes, the role of the designer, design artefacts and design practices within organisational contexts. This research is relevant for academics, design practitioners and management audiences alike.

